



Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Shoftim | Sichah 3

The Rambam:

In his laws of prophecy, Rambam writes that we do not believe in Moshe because of any miracles that he performed, but rather, because of the public display of his prophetic communication with G-d at Sinai. Therefore, Rambam concludes:

“If a prophet arises and attempts to dispute Moshe’s prophecy by performing great signs and wonders, we should not listen to him... because the prophecy of Moshe, our teacher, is not dependent on wonders, so that we could compare these wonders, one against the other. Rather, we saw and heard with our own eyes and ears as he did [at Sinai]. (*Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah*, 8:3)

The Question:

Seemingly, in his halachic work, *Mishneh Torah*, Rambam should have employed a *halachic* argument — that we do not listen to prophets who contradict Moshe because Moshe’s prophecy is written in the Torah and therefore, it has stronger precedent. Rambam’s logical argument — that our belief in Moshe derives from witnessing his prophecy — seemingly belongs in his philosophical *Moreh Nevuchim* rather than in the *Mishneh Torah*.

The Explanation:

Mitzvos that are commanded by G-d in Scripture are expressions of G-d’s essential will. Like G-d Himself, they cannot be a means to an end. Because the mitzvos do not exist for some other objective, they are eternal — they exist independent of external circumstances. But commands issued by the prophets are utilitarian in nature. The prophet sees it fit to protect a certain

observance, so he issues a command. These commands do not have the eternal power of the G-d-given Scriptural mitzvos.

On the other hand, G-d's truths as revealed in Scripture are absolute and indifferent to human recipients. Prophetic revelation, however, reveals the Divine in the voice of the human being. It brings G-d's word closer to a person, allowing him to digest it using his own abilities.

Thus, there is an advantage to Divinely revealed truth and a different advantage to prophetic revelation.

This is what makes Moshe's prophecy unique. Being that his prophecy was validated at the Giving of the Torah, it combines the strengths of both modes of transmission. It has the immovable power of Scriptural revelation, and the intimate closeness of prophetic revelation. Moshe enabled the people to internalize (the advantage of prophecy) the eternal, transcendent truths of the Torah (the advantage of Scripture).

This also explains the sequence of Rambam's laws in chapters seven and eight.

In chapter seven, Rambam discusses the unique nature of Moshe's prophecy. In chapter eight, he adds another element — that Moshe's prophecy was validated at Sinai and therefore, it also had the power of Scriptural revelation.